**Sample Dear Colleague Letter**

[Date]

Dear Colleague:

[State Health Department Name] is examining a group of related HIV infections among gay and bisexual men in [County A and County B] in the [region] part of the state. HIV data reported to the [State Health Department Name] show:

* The total number of HIV cases in the state has been stable in recent years, with 45 reported diagnoses of HIV infection in 2017, compared to 42 in 2016 and 46 in 2015.
* However, an analysis of lab data shows a group of related infections among gay and bisexual men in County A and County B, which suggests that HIV transmission could be occurring faster than would be expected for this area.
* The lab data show there are at least 10 related infections, although there may be other related infections that have not yet been identified.

1. The group of related infections was discovered as part of the [State Health Department Name] regular monitoring of HIV data and is a routine part of its work in public health.
2. Through interviews and other efforts, health officials hope to identify whether additional related infections exist. This will allow public health officials to better understand the factors that may be contributing to HIV transmission and attempt to determine whether others are at risk. Using this information, public health officials can work to identify whether people who are affected have access to HIV care, treatment and prevention services and can determine if additional response measures are needed.
3. Health officials have recommended the following actions be taken in [County A and County B] to diagnose additional infections and to reduce the risk of further transmission:

* Conduct a complete sexual and drug use risk assessment for all high-risk individuals. This includes information about specific behaviors, such as number of partners, types of sex (i.e., vaginal, anal, oral), sex and gender identity of partners, drugs used, and mode of drug delivery.
* Identify and offer HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) testing and other services to high-risk individuals who do not access health care or who may not take advantage of HIV and STI testing in clinical settings.
* Facilitate access to clean syringes and essential support services for people who inject drugs, where legally permissible.
* Assist HIV-positive or high-risk negative individuals with gaining access to medical, prevention, and support services.
* Implement effective prevention activities and target those activities to populations and geographic areas identified in this cluster.
* Explore new and innovative intervention strategies such as using dating apps to reach the affected population for targeted prevention messaging or to promote testing.
* Remain alert to increases in HIV and other STI transmission, new HIV and STI diagnoses, and unusual patterns in risk behaviors.
* Report cases of HIV (all stages) and suspected or confirmed STI cases to [insert reporting protocols here].
* Contact [Health Department Contact] or your local health department to report suspected clusters of recent HIV or HCV infection.

[State Health Department Name] recognizes all the work you do to prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. We appreciate your attention to this important public health issue and look forward to supporting you now and in the future. We look forward to keeping you informed in the near future.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title]

[Health Department Name]